**Nasu Heisei-no-mori Forest**

The Nasu Heisei-no-mori Forest was created in 2011. The forest occupies nearly half of the former Nasu Imperial Villa estate, land previously reserved for the imperial family’s use. In 2008, Emperor Akihito (reigned 1989–2019) granted the land to the Ministry of the Environment to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of his ascension to the throne. Its approximately 560 hectares form a protected environment where people can interact with nature while preserving it for future generations. Nasu Heisei-no-mori Forest opened to the public in 2011 as part of Nikko National Park.

Prior to the twentieth century, the land now occupied by Heisei-no-mori was used for logging and horse pasturage. When the area became part of the Nasu Imperial Villa estate, its use was restricted, and the land began to return to its natural forested state. Today, this young forest continues to grow and develop, and with proper care it may someday rival the world’s most pristine ecosystems.

The Field Center is the forest’s main facility and serves as a gateway to the forest’s two zones: the Forest Recreation Zone and the Forest Learning Zone. The Forest Recreation Zone, with wheelchair accessibility, fulfills Emperor Akihito’s desire that everyone have unrestricted access to Nasu’s natural environment. Visitors may wander its paths freely, and the trails are suitable for all ages and ability levels.

Between 1997 and 2001, the Tochigi Prefectural Museum identified 3,492 species of wildlife in the Nasu Imperial estate. Of these species, 23 were previously unrecorded, and 25 were recorded in Japan for the first time. Preserving and studying this ecological diversity is the goal of the Forest Learning Zone, Heisei-no-mori’s second area. Ongoing scientific studies are conducted in the Learning Zone, and visitors can only enter on guided tours led by experienced naturalists known as “nature interpreters.”